

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 DPW-01 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 236116

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN POLICY TOWARD CAMBODIA

REF: A. USUN 5250, B. CANBERRA 6483, C. CANBERRA 6405,

D. CANBERRA 6495

1. IN ABSENCE AUSTRALIAN AMB. PLIMSOLL, DEPUTY ASST
SECTY STEARNS TOOK UP CAMBODIAN ISSUE WITH AUSTRALIAN
MINISTER FERNANDEZ NOV. 30. INDICATING THAT USG WAS
DEEPLY CONCERNED BY EQUIVOCAL NOISES EMANATING FROM
CANBERRA ON STATUS AND LEGITIMACY OF GKR, RECENTLY
CULMINATING IN AUSTRALIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM ESF, STEARNS
MADE FOLLOWING POINTS: (A) LON NOL GOVT WAS LEGITIMATE
SUCCESSOR OF SIHANOUK, WHO HAD BEEN LEGALLY REMOVED BY
CAMBODIAN PARLIAMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH TERMS OF KHMER
CONSTITUTION; (B) NEITHER US NOR OTHER FOREIGN POWER HAD
IN ANY WAY INTERVENED TO BRING ABOUT SIHANOUK'S FALL;

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(C) FOLLOWING SIHANOUK'S OUSTER, LON NOL HAD ATTEMPTED

TO PRESERVE CAMBODIAN NEUTRALITY AND NEGOTIATE END TO HOSTILITIES WITH COMMUNISTS BUT HAD BEEN REBUFFED BY NORTH VIETNAMESE AND THEIR KHMER ROUGE ALLIES WHO HAD IMMEDIATELY BEGUN DETERMINED EFFORT TO OVERTHROW GKR BY FORCE OF ARMS; (C) USG WAS EQUALLY DETERMINED TO PREVENT VIOLENT OVERTHROW OF GKR AND WOULD CONTINUE TO ASSIST KHMER IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY TO AVERT MILITARY DEFEAT AND ACHIEVE MILITARY EQUILIBRIUM UPON WHICH NEGOTIATIONS AMONG KHMER POLITICAL FACTIONS COULD BE BASED; (E) COMING DRY SEASON IN CAMBODIA WAS CRITICAL PERIOD IN WHICH COMMUNISTS COULD BE EXPECTED TO MAKE MAXIMUM EFFORT TO BREAK GKR; (F) ACCORDINGLY, WE BELIEVED THIS WAS TIME FOR STATES FAVORING A PEACEFUL NEGOTIATED SOLUTION TO CAMBODIAN CONFLICT TO RALLY AROUND GKR AND PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION IN MILITARY, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION WHICH WOULD ONLY PERPETUATE BLOODSHED AND INSTABILITY IN CAMBODIA.

2. STEARNS WENT ON TO SAY THAT USG ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO COMING DEBATE ON KHMER REPRESENTATION AT UNITED NATIONS. WE WERE GRAVELY DISTURBED BY SUGGESTIONS THAT AUSTRALIA MIGHT WITHDRAW RECOGNITION OF GKR IF CAMBODIA-UN SEAT WAS AWARDED TO SIHANOUK (INFERENCE THAT COULD BE DRAWN FROM WHITLAM'S REMARKS NOV. 8 AT NATIONAL PRESS CLUB). WE HOPED THAT OUR APPREHENSIONS ON THIS SCORE WERE UNWARRANTED AND THAT AUSTRALIA, LIKE OTHER MEMBERS OF ASIAN GROUP, WOULD EXERT EVERY EFFORT TO SUPPORT GKR IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND RESTRAIN GA FROM TAKING STEP WHICH WOULD HAVE EXTREMELY DAMAGING IMPLICATIONS NOT ONLY FOR CAMBODIAN PEACE BUT FOR UN ITSELF.

3. FERNANDEZ REPLIED BY SAYING THAT HE WAS NOT RPT NOT AWARE OF ANY INTENTION OF AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO WITHDRAW RECOGNITION FROM GKR IN EVENT OF ADVERSE UN VOTE. HE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES ON WHITLAM WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY WERE STRONG AND ACKNOWLEDGED THAT PRIMIN'S STATEMENTS ON CAMBODIA HAD BEEN EQUIVOCAL. STEARNS REITERATED OUR EARNEST HOPE THAT GOA WOULD NOT UNDERCUT OUR EFFORTS IN NEW YORK,

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ADDING THAT IT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE TO TAKE ACTIONS WHICH COULD AFFECT ADVERSELY CLIMATE FOR BARNARD VISIT IN JANUARY.

4. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION BY FERNANDEZ ON REPORTED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HANOI AND KHMER ROUGE, STEARNS SAID THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO GAUGE THEIR EXTENT BUT WE BELIEVED TENSIONS CERTAINLY EXISTED ON COMMUNIST SIDE,

AS THEY DID BETWEEN SIHANOUK AND HANOI, AND THAT THIS WAS A FURTHER INDICATION THAT COMMUNIST MILITARY VICTORY WAS NEITHER ASSURED NOR A PRESCRIPTION FOR "STABILITY".

5. FERNANDEZ SAID HE WOULD REPORT OUR CONCERNS FULLY TO CANBERRA.

6. COMMENT: WE HAVE JUST RECEIVED REF A FROM USUN INDICATING GOA INTENDS TO ABSTAIN ON MOTION TO DEFER VOTE ON PRO-SIHANOUK RESOLUTION. BELIEVE I IMPORTANT FOR AMBASSADOR TO COVER GROUND AGAIN WITH GOA WHICH

SHOULD BY EARLY IN WEEK HAVE RECEIVED FERNANDEZ' REPORT OF DEMARCH HERE. ANY WAVERING BY GOA COULD HAVE VERY DAMAGING EFFECT ON OUR EFFORTS TO OBTAIN INDEFINITE DEFERMENT IN N.Y. PORTER

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